**Completion status of MCL (Vasundhara area) Orissa**

3207. MISS FRIDA TOPNO: Will the Minister of COAL be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that MCL (Vasundhara area) in Orissa a new mines project is nearing completion;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the details of Asia's biggest mines project in Kulta area in Orissa and the progress made so far in the matter; and

(d) the steps taken to complete it at the earliest?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COAL (SHRI SYED SHAHNAWAZ HUSSAIN): (a) and (b) Vasundhara (East) Project of 0.60 mty capacity and sanctioned cost of Rs. 19.69 crores in the Vasundhara area of Mahanadi Coalfields Limited (MCL), Orissa has been completed in March, 1998.

(c) and (d) Kulda Opencast Project is one of the mining projects to be taken up for implementation by MCL in the Vasundhara area. This project has been planned for a capacity of 10 mty and its estimated capital cost is about Rs. 948 crores (June, 1997 base price). An Advance Action Proposal (AAP) of Rs. 8.62 crores has been sanctioned by the Government in October, 1995 in respect of this Project. Development of infrastructural facilities like road, electric power supply etc. have been undertaken under the provisions of AAP sanctioned for early commencement of coal production after approval of the Project by the Government. Environmental Management Plan (EMP) is under process for approval in Ministry of Environment and Forests. After approval of EMP, the project proposal would be submitted by the Coal Company Ltd. (MCL) for approval of the Government.

**MCL's policy regarding coal extraction**

3208. SHRI ANANTA SETHI: Will the Minister of COAL be pleased to state:

(a) the policy of the Mahanadi Coalfield Ltd. (MCL) with regard to extraction of coal;

(b) whether MCL is mainly extracting coal from the opencast mines;

(c) if so, the steps taken by MCL to compensate the felling of trees and to restore the ecology as it is going for opencast coal mining; and

(d) the details of steps taken in this regard during last three years?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COAL (SHRI SYED SHAHNAWAZ HUSSAIN): (a) MCL is exploiting coal reserves in the Orissa State from the underground and opencast mines to meet the coal requirement of consumers situated in Orissa as well as Southern States. Coal reserves are being exploited by MCL economically, with deployment of suitable technology with due regard to safety, conservation, consumers satisfaction and ecology.

(b) At present, MCL is extracting 97% of its total production from opencast mines.

(c) and (d) The measures taken by MCL during the last three years are as under:—

(i) In all the opencast mines of MCL the area excavated is concurrently backfilled which is then technically and biologically reclaimed. In the backfilled area planting of suitable species of trees at the rate of 2500 Nos. per hectare is being done.

(ii) In addition to plantation in the back-filled ground, the external dumps as well as the surrounding lands in the lease hold area are also planted with trees at the rate of 2500 Nos./hectare.

(iii) Against diversion of forest land, "compensatory afforestation" is done in identified plots of the land whose title is transferred as forest land.

(iv) During the last three years a total No. of 10.52 lakh trees have been planted.

(v) The terminal voids in the opencast mines area are used a repositories of water which are used for multiple purposes *e.g.* meeting the industrial and portable water needs (after treatment) of the company as well as serving to recharge the ground water table in the area. Thus maintaining and even improving the ecology of the surroundings.

(vi) Environmental and social mitigation projects are also being implemented at Jagannath, Ananta, Bharatpur, Samleswari, Lakhanpur and Belpahar opencast mines under world bank credit.